

LIVING GODS WILL

The Disciple

AQUILA & PRISCILLA



Aquila and Priscilla

The Disciple **AQUILA & PRISCILLA**

Page 1

Born: Italy

Died: Rome

Death: They were tortured and executed together

They were converted to Christianity by the **Apostle Paul**

They were co-workers and friends of the **Apostle Paul**

They had a **church in their home**

They were **tentmakers**

Priscilla and **Aquila** were a first century Christian missionary married couple described in the New Testament.

Aquila is traditionally listed among the **Seventy Disciples**.

They lived, worked, and traveled with the **Apostle Paul**, who described them as his "**fellow workers in Christ Jesus**" (**Romans 16:3**).

Priscilla and **Aquila** are described in the New Testament as providing a presence that strengthened the early Christian churches.

Paul was generous in his recognition and acknowledgment of his indebtedness to them (**Rom. 16:3-4**).

Together, they are credited with instructing **Apollos**, a major evangelist of the first century, and "**[explaining] to him the way of God more accurately**" (**Acts 18:26**).

It is thought by some to be possible, in light of her apparent prominence, that **Priscilla** held the office of **presbyter**. She also is thought by some to be the anonymous author of the **Epistle to the Hebrews**.

The Christian Church, beginning with **Jesus**, had a radical view of the status of women. **Jesus** demonstrated that he valued women and men equally as being made in the image of **God**.

Luke clearly indicates **Priscilla's** "**agency and her interdependent relationship with her husband. She is certainly not Aquila's property - as was customary in Greco-Roman society - but rather his partner in ministry and marriage**".

Priscilla and **Aquila** were tentmakers as was **Paul**.

The Disciple **AQUILA & PRISCILLA**

Page 2

Priscilla and **Aquila** had been among the Jews expelled from Rome by the Roman Emperor **Claudius** in the year **49 AD** as written by **Suetonius**.

They ended up in Corinth. **Paul** lived with **Priscilla** and **Aquila** for approximately 18 months.

Then the couple started out to accompany **Paul** when he proceeded to Syria, but stopped at Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia, now part of modern Turkey.

In **1 Corinthians 16:19**, **Paul** passes on the greetings of **Priscilla** and **Aquila** to their friends in Corinth, indicating that the couple were in his company.

Paul founded the church in Corinth. His including them in his greetings implies that **Priscilla** and **Aquila** were also involved in the founding of that church.

Since **1 Corinthians** discusses a crisis deriving from a conflict between the followers of **Apollos** and the followers of **Cephas** (possibly the **apostle Peter**), it can be inferred that **Apollos** accompanied **Priscilla** and **Aquila** when they returned to Corinth.

This happened before **54 AD** when **Claudius** died and the expulsion of the Jews from Rome was lifted.

In **Romans 16:3-4**, thought to have been written in **56 or 57 AD**, **Paul** sends his greetings to **Priscilla** and **Aquila** and proclaims that both of them "**risked their necks**" to save **Paul's** life.

Tradition reports that Aquila and Priscilla were martyred together in Rome.

Priscilla was a woman of Jewish heritage and one of the earliest known Christian converts who lived in Rome. Her name is a Roman diminutive for **Prisca** which was her formal name.

She is often thought to have been the first example of a **female preacher** or teacher in early church history. Coupled with her husband, she was a celebrated missionary, and a friend and co-worker of **Paul**.

While the view is not widely held among scholars, some scholars have suggested that **Priscilla** was the author of the **Book of Hebrews**. Although acclaimed for its artistry, originality, and literary excellence, it is the only book in the New Testament with author anonymity.

She is the only **Priscilla** named in the New Testament. The fact that she is always mentioned with her husband, **Aquila**, disambiguates her from different women revered as saints in Catholicism, such as (1) **Priscilla of the Roman Glabrio family**, the wife of **Quintus Cornelius Pudens**, who according to some traditions hosted **St. Peter** circa **AD 42**, and (2) a third-century virgin martyr named **Priscilla** and also called **Prisca**.

Aquila, husband of **Priscilla**, was originally from Pontus and also was a Jewish Christian.

According to church tradition, **Aquila** did not dwell long in Rome: the **Apostle Paul** is said to have made him a **bishop** in Asia Minor. The Apostolic Constitutions identify **Aquila**, along with **Nicetas**, as the first bishops of Asia Minor.

This couple were among the earliest known Christian missionaries in the first century.

In **Acts 18:24-28**, **Luke** reports the couple explaining **Jesus'** baptism to **Apollos**, an important Jewish-Christian evangelist in Ephesus.

Paul indicates **Apollos** is an apostle, an "**eloquent speaker**" who had a "**thorough knowledge of the Scriptures**". He had been "**instructed in the way of the Lord**" which he taught with great "**enthusiasm**".

He began to preach boldly in the synagogue. However, he knew only the baptism of **John the Baptist**—not the baptism taught by **Jesus**. When **Priscilla** and **Aquila** heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of **God** to him "**more accurately**".

Amongst churches today, this passage is often held in perceived tension with **1 Timothy 2:12-14**, in which the author, **Paul**, writes, "**I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.**"

Opponents of female pastorship cite his reference to **Adam and Eve** to be indicating that the issue is a matter of universal gender propriety.

On the other hand, **Catherine and Richard Kroeger** have written:

The fact is that women did indeed teach men, that women served as leaders, and that in doing so they enjoyed **God's** blessing and won the praise of other believers.

Priscilla instructed the learned **Apollos**, **Lois and Eunice** taught **Timothy**, and **Phoebe** is named as an overseer and a deacon in the church at Cenchræa.

Furthermore, believers are enjoined to teach and to learn from one another, without reference to gender.

Advocates of female pastorship perceive this as an imperative that was a reflection of cultural and legal restrictions of the day.

They cite **1 Cor 11:11-12**, where **Paul** writes "**Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God**"

and his affirmation of **Priscilla's** instruction of the prominent evangelist **Apollos** as evidence that **Paul** was acceding to the law and customs of his day.

Another hallmark of the lives of **Priscilla** and **Aquila** is their desire to build others in the faith.

Paul's last reference to them is in his last letter. **Paul** was imprisoned in Rome and writing to **Timothy** one last time. **Timothy** was pastoring the church at Ephesus, and **Aquila** and **Priscilla** are there with him, still faithfully ministering (**2 Timothy 4:19**).

To the end, **Aquila** and **Priscilla** were offering hospitality to other Christians, spreading the gospel they had learned from **Paul**, and rendering faithful service to the Master.

The Great Fire on July **19 AD**, which destroyed 10 of the 14 districts in Rome, was blamed on Christians. **Aquila** and **Priscilla** were martyred with other Christians in Rome.

Legend has it that Aquila and Priscilla were tortured and then executed.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Acts 18:2 And he found a certain Jew named **Aquila**, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife **Priscilla** (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

Acts 18:18 So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and **Priscilla** and **Aquila** were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.

Acts 18:26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When **Aquila** and **Priscilla** heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

Romans 16:3 Greet **Priscilla** and **Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

1st Corinthians 16:19 The churches of Asia greet you. **Aquila** and **Priscilla** greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

2nd Timothy 4:19 Greet **Prisca** and **Aquila**, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.



**A main thoroughfare in the ancient city of Corinth
Priscilla, Aquila and Paul almost certainly
walked along this street**